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MONTANA LETTER

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REAP PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED

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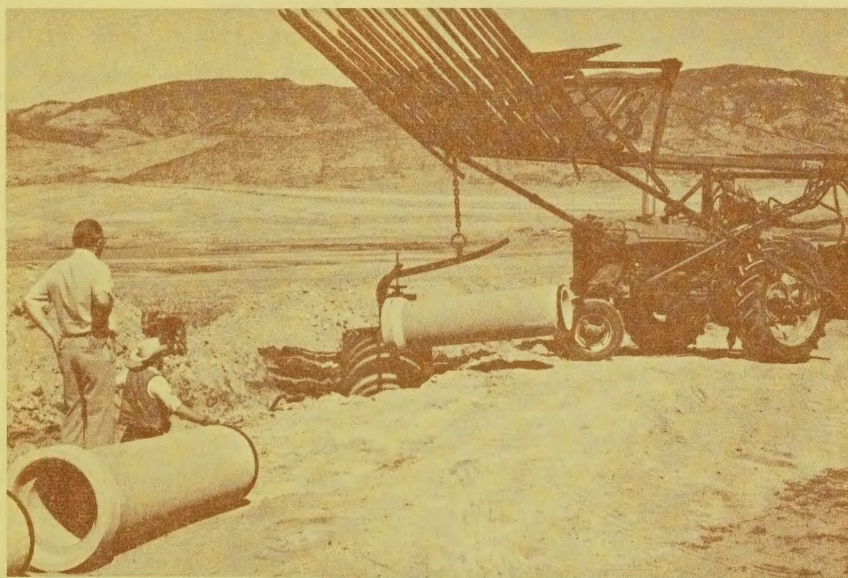
We haven't reported to you recently on this year's rural environmental assistance program (REAP). And we want you to know that it is alive, well, and still helping many farmers and ranchers meet their pollution and conservation problems and conserve natural resources.

You may remember that we have been allocated slightly more than \$5 million for REAP cost-sharing assistance this year. With cost-sharing rates averaging 50% of out-of-pocket costs (although they range between 30 and 80 percent), our allocation is sufficient to help producers carry out conservation and pollution abatement practices costing at least twice that much.

To obtain the maximum benefits from our program funds, a State REAP Investment Plan delineates priorities. It calls for concentration of funds and efforts to control agriculturally related pollution and sedimentation of waterways, encouragement of better range management and improved management of forests. County committees in turn develop their own REAP Investment Plans designed to concentrate local efforts on those problem areas which they feel are most significant.

Our State plan recognizes sedimen-

tation of streams and rivers as the major single agricultural pollutant. Measures to reduce this pollution source and to properly dispose of animal waste are needed on nearly every farm or ranch. Practices given high priority for meeting these problems include establishment of vegetative cover, stripcropping, facilities to divert and store animal waste, disposal pits for solid wastes, measures to stabilize sediment sources and



Reorganization of existing irrigation systems makes possible more efficient use of water and reduces erosion. This reorganization pooling project in Jefferson County will replace open ditches with 2,965 feet of concrete and plastic buried mainline to bring water to 314 acres of cropland. Norman Bruce, one of the two REAP project participants, is shown directing laying of 15-inch concrete pipe while Bill Beedle (left) representative of the Elk River Concrete Products Co. at Helena, looks on.

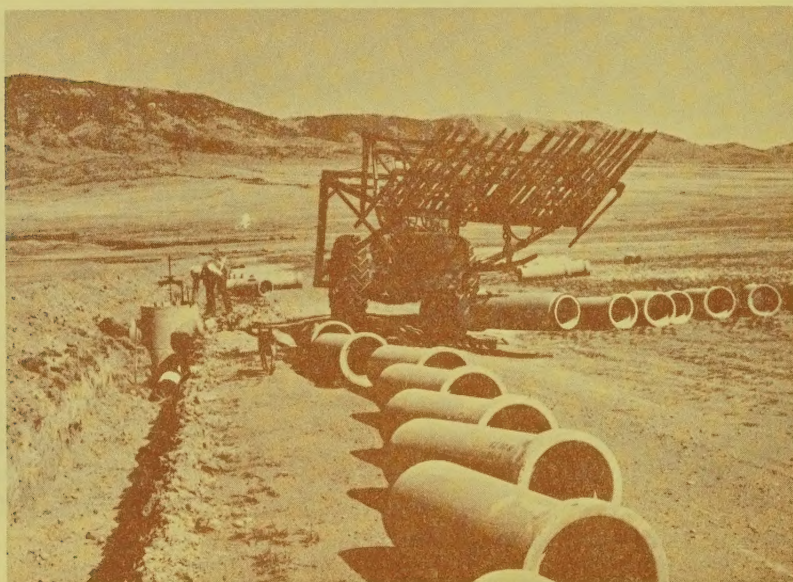
sediment retention and water control structures.

Our plan continues to recognize the importance of proper range management, an emphasis in cost-sharing programs

since the 1930's. The high priority practices suggested contribute to reduction of soil losses with resultant sedimentation, and to improvement of forage resources.

They include improving and protecting permanent vegetative cover by fencing, deferred grazing or controlling big sagebrush and developing facilities for livestock water by installing reservoirs, wells, springs and pipelines to deliver water from a reliable source to dry areas.

Montana's agricultural resources include some 4.8 million acres of privately owned commercial forests. The improvement of much of the area, as well as planting of trees and shrubs for shelterbelts and windbreaks, is also considered a high priority need. Therefore, our plan for this year also emphasizes these two practices -- planting of trees and shrubs and timber stand improvement.



This REAP project, being carried out by John Jardine and Norman Bruce, will provide an improved water supply to increase forage production. Five two-way turnouts with gates and four risers with one-way turnouts on the mainline pipe will increase irrigation efficiency. REAP cost-sharing of about \$1,950 will cover 30 percent of the cost of the reorganization project.

Other practices offered under this year's REAP are generally considered to have a lower priority and will be approved at lower rates of cost-

sharing or only if sufficient money is available to meet requests for the higher priority work.

Another emphasis this year is on projects which assist in the solution of community wide pollution or conservation problems. Many times this requires pooling agreements for the "group approach" to solving these types of problems.

In addition to the practices approved for State-wide use, many county committees have received approval to authorize special projects or practices to meet problems peculiar to their areas.

Generally speaking, funds are still available for cost-sharing in all, or most all, counties. If a county is temporarily out of funds, cost-sharing requests will be accepted subject to approval as money becomes available.

REFUND PROBLEMS CONSIDERED

At our recent area meetings on price support and production adjustment operations, several reports were made of wheat growers complaining about double collection of the State assessment on wheat. These are instances where the assessment was collected when the grain was placed under CCC loan; then, when it was redeemed and sold, the assessment was again deducted.

We are not in position to remedy this situation, since we have agreed only to collect the assessment on wheat offered for price support loan and transmit this money to the proper authorities.

None of the deductions go to USDA and no charge is made to the wheat commission for the collection service.

We have relayed farmer complaints to the wheat commission executive officer who has indicated steps will be taken to correct the situation as he becomes aware of specific cases.

Meanwhile, he has agreed to send us a supply of refund forms for distribution to ASCS county offices. This will enable farmers who incur double deductions to immediately secure refund applications rather than writing to the commission office in Great Falls for a form on which to make application for a refund.

The law provides for refund of assessments to growers who file written requests to the committee through the Commissioner of Agriculture. Requests must be filed more than 30 days after the deduction of the assessment and before the expiration of 90 days following the deduction. The request must be accompanied by the original invoices received by the grower at the time a deduction is made and these invoices will be returned to the grower with his refund.

We hope our actions will help rectify an undesirable situation for price support participants.

CONNOR, BERLAND HONORED

Two more long-time county committeemen who declined to seek re-election when their terms ended last December have been honored recently by their friends and co-workers.



Herbert Berland

At Conrad, Herb Berland, after 20 years service on the Pondera County committee, was honor guest at a dinner party at The Target. Herb served in

all positions on the committee, including five terms as chairman. He also served seven terms as a community committeeman.

Herb also found time to participate in a variety of community affairs, including Lions International where he held the office of district governor, as well as local offices. Herb's future plans include being vice president of the board of directors of the proposed Horizon Lodge Retirement Home for Pondera county.

Tom Connor of Melrose retired after 23 years on the Silver Bow County committee, the last nine as chairman. He has also served and is continuing as a supervisor of the Mile High Conservation District.

A program based on the "This Is Your Life, Tom" theme was a feature of his retirement party at the Ramada Inn in Butte. His daughter, Joan Marie, scripted the act and many of his associates in various activities helped recall memorable incidents from out of the past.



Mr. and Mrs. Tom Connor and daughter, Joan Marie

Herb and Tom have been conscientious, active committeemen who have given their best to the direction of agricultural programs and their communities. Their years of service show the confidence and esteem in which they are held, and there just isn't much anyone can add to testimonials like that.

We'll miss their counsel and assistance but we wish them continued success as they turn their talents to other needs.

BUTZ SEES PROMISING FUTURE

Agriculture and rural America are moving into a new and promising future, Secretary of Agriculture Earl L. Butz states in his first annual report to the President.

Titled "Shaping the Future", the Secretary's report says that during the



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the past year farm programs allowed farmers to make more of their own farm operating decisions, the advance in agricultural efficiency and output per man-hour continued, farm output soared to a new high, and

there was a spectacular jump in agricultural exports.

The immediate economic outlook is also brighter. Realized net farm income in 1972 should be about \$2 billion higher than in 1971, and the average realized net income per farm will rise to a new high.

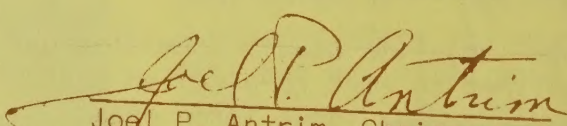
Even so, the average farm resident has only about 75 percent as much after-taxes personal income from all sources as the average non-farm resident. Although this was well above the 55 percent ratio of 1960, "a wide disparity in the incomes of farm and nonfarm Americans still exists," the report says. "It is vitally important that farm people should share more equitably in American economic growth."

"Among the brightest agricultural aspects of the year was the upsurge in farm exports to a record \$7.8 billion in fiscal 1971, 15 percent above the previous all-time high of 1970," the report continues.

Spurred by record crops of wheat, corn, soybeans and all feed grains, farm production in 1971 rose by about 9 percent, the sharpest one-year increase in total farm output since the 1940's.

SPREADING IT THIN...AND QUICK

MONTANA'S WINTER WHEAT production for 1972 is estimated at 45.5 million bushels. Excepting for 1970, this would be the smallest crop since 1962 and 17 percent below last year... WINTER WHEAT PRODUCTION for the Nation is estimated at 1.1 billion bushels, only 1 percent less than last year's crop... JULY 3 IS THE FINAL certification date for producers participating in the wheat and feed grain set-aside programs. The final date would be July 1 but since this falls on Saturday, participants have two additional days to file... IN THE FIRST four days of signup, 49 farmers in our six water bank counties offered 7,903 acres for the bank. The signup continues through June 9.


Joel P. Antrim, Chairman
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